

The Lavon Affair: How a false-flag operation led to war and the Israeli bomb

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The Lavon Affair, a failed Israeli covert operation directed against Egypt in 1954, triggered a chain of events that have had profound consequences for power relationships in the Middle East; the affair's effects still reverberate today. Those events included a public trial and conviction of eight Egyptian Jews who carried out the covert operation, two of whom were subsequently executed; a retaliatory military incursion by Israel into Gaza that killed 39 Egyptians; a subsequent Egyptian–Soviet arms deal that angered American and British leaders, who then withdrew previously pledged support for the building of the Aswan Dam; the announced nationalization of the Suez Canal by Nasser in retaliation for the withdrawn support; and the subsequent failed invasion of Egypt by Israel, France, and Britain in an attempt to topple Nasser. In the wake of that failed invasion, France expanded and accelerated its ongoing nuclear cooperation with Israel, which eventually enabled the Jewish state to build nuclear weapons.